

Alberta M. Kirkpatrick, 98



Alberta May MacMillan Kirkpatrick, 98, a recent resident of the Suites at the Rouse, Youngsville, and previously of Warren, PA, died on Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016 at the John and Orpha Blair Hospice House, Warren.

Alberta was born July 15, 1918, in Boston, MA, the oldest child of Malcolm MacMillan and Nina Keith Mac-Millan. Following her mother's death when Alberta was 6, she attended Boston public schools until age 11 when she went to live with the Shaker Community at Canterbury Shaker Village, East Canterbury, NH. She graduated from their high school program in 1934, a student of Sister Marguerite Frost who had also become her surrogate mother.

Alberta was the last child taken to be raised in a Shaker Community. The Shakers, a religious sect, (The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing) founded in the late 1700s in England, was based on Quaker principles. The Shakers, the most successful of the country's many utopian societies in the 1800s, established 14 self-sustaining farming communities. The progressive and inventive Brothers and Sisters created many of the tools and methods used today, patenting none, preferring to share them for the common good.

The celibate communities, now extinct, often took in children who were from orphaned or challenging family situations. Alberta lived with the Canterbury Shakers until she was 18. Celebrating Alberta's long life, the Shaker Village mounted a museum retrospective of her childhood years at the community, which was also chronicled in Yankee Magazine. As Canterbury's last child, armed with her acute memory, Alberta was the only remaining resource for correct furniture placement and usage of many artifacts at the living museum. On her 90th birthday, the staff and trustees dedicated the day to her and the Associated Press covered the event. Alberta (or Birdie as she was known by the Shakers) laughingly considered it her 15 minutes of fame. Birdie credited her early years with the Shakers as both life altering and defining, years that formed her values, her work ethic and her lifelong curiosity. She was an honorary member of the Board of Canterbury Shaker Village.

The Shakers of Canterbury gave their girls classical educations in their cloistered hilltop school but no skills that translated to employment in the "outside" world. Alberta worked many years in both manufacturing jobs and the hospitality industry, eventually becoming a traveling dining room manager for the Red Coach Grilles Corporation, working seasonally in MA, CT, FL and CA.

In her later years she volunteered as a docent at the historic King Caesar House in Duxbury and as a volunteer driver for the Duxbury Senior Citizens' bus, continuing until her retirement at age 81, when she moved to Warren, PA to be near her daughter. She was a member of First United Methodist Church in Warren.

Alberta served many terms as president of the Duxbury Senior Citizens and was their travel director, taking the club to destinations around the U.S. and Canada and many European countries. She loved everything involving travel, drove until she was 96, and on one of her many coast-to-coast trips, she crossed the country alone from Cape Cod to Los Angeles in two and a half days. She saw more of her beautiful world of mountains, oceans, sunsets and flowers from behind the wheel than most people see from the passenger seat. Any trip was truly complete if it involved visiting and climbing a lighthouse, a favorite destination. She was instrumental in saving and restoring the historic Duxbury Bug Light.

She managed the federal surplus food program in Duxbury, served as an emergency response director for Pilgrim Nuclear Station in Plymouth, MA, and hosted a local closed-circuit television show for seniors in Plymouth county. Mrs. Kirkpatrick enjoyed gardening, baking and jigsaw puzzles, dedicating time to reading and crossword puzzles so she could “keep the grey stuff sharp.”

A truly joyful person, she loved nothing better than sharing a good story or a great laugh with friends, and even more if she could offer them hospitality around her table. Her wit and humor won her many friends throughout her life.

In addition to her parents and Sister Marguerite, Alberta was predeceased by her husband, Francis Earl Kirkpatrick, of Duxbury, whom she married in 1968 in Santa Ana, CA and who died in 1983; her brothers Chester Malcolm MacMillan and Kenneth Arthur Mac-Millan, a sister Rose Etta Rodrigues, her son-in-law, Thomas O'Brien and several nieces and nephews. She is survived by her daughter Marcy O'Brien (husband Richard Fisher) of Warren, PA, a granddaughter, Alix Susanne O'Brien Fox (Ian) of Lexington, MA, a grandson, Barton Bennett O'Brien of Annapolis, MD, and two great-grandchildren, Keira and Malcolm Fox. She is also survived by two nephews, many cousins and a dear friend, Patt Gilliland of Hemet, CA.

Friends are invited to call at the Donald E. Lewis Funeral Home, Inc., 304 East Street, Warren, PA., on Saturday, September 24, 2016 from 4-7 p.m.

A memorial service will take place at First United Methodist Church, 200 Market St., Warren, PA at 2 p.m., on Sunday, Sept. 25 followed by a Celebration of Life for friends and family at the Conewango Club at 3 p.m.

A memorial service will be conducted at Canterbury Shaker Village later this fall at a date to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Alberta's beloved Canterbury Shaker Village, Shaker Road, East Canterbury, NH 03224 or Hospice of Warren County, 1 Main Ave., Warren, PA. Burial will be in Mayflower Cemetery, Duxbury at the convenience of the family.